

N.I.B. BULLETINS

No. 10

**MASSAGE**  
**AS A**  
**PROFESSION**  
**FOR THE BLIND**

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**Price 6d.**  
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Published by the  
**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND**  
*(Registered under the Blind Persons Act, 1920)*  
**224-6-8, Great Portland Street, London, W.1**

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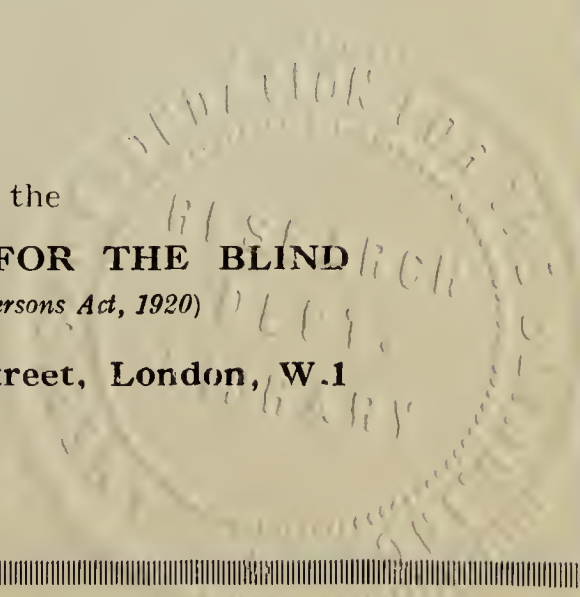
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## Massage as a Profession for the Blind.

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The "handicap of blindness" is a phrase to which the worker for the blind, and especially the worker whose concern it is to find employment for the blind, has grown so accustomed that it is almost with a shock of surprise that he learns of one profession where blindness need impose no handicap at all, and may be even transformed into an asset. It is, however, a proven fact that the blind man or woman, given good health, the personal qualities that make for success, a thorough training, and the necessary professional qualifications that follow that training, may, as masseur or masseuse, meet the seeing upon terms of complete equality. From babyhood the blind child is trained to use his fingers and hands, in order that the world about him may be interpreted in terms of touch; the delicacy and sureness of touch thus acquired should prove of the highest value to him if he takes up a profession like massage in adult life. It is generally agreed also that blindness, by cutting out the distraction of a coloured, moving, exciting world, does make concentration more possible; Sir Robert Jones, the famous orthopaedic surgeon, used to speak of an extremely skilled seeing masseur known to him, who always closed his eyes as he treated his patients, because he found concentration came more easily in this way. If concentration upon the work in hand and delicacy of touch in dealing lightly, yet firmly, with surfaces made sensitive by pain, are two of the outstanding qualities of the good masseur, the trained

blind worker is in a strong position ; such difficulties as he may encounter will be mainly those based upon ignorance or prejudice, and these the intrinsic merits of his work should overcome.

It has therefore been thought worth while to devote a Bulletin to the subject of massage as a career for the blind in order that those responsible for the welfare of the blind may know something of the type of candidate likely to succeed, the course of training he or she must follow, and the future prospects of those who, in due course, become qualified.

The National Institute for the Blind's School of Massage was founded in 1915, but a tribute should be paid to the much earlier work begun in 1900, when the London Institute of Massage was founded under the Chairmanship of Mr. Henry Power to train blind masseurs and masseuses. It did very valuable pioneer work, mainly under the direction of Dr. Fletcher Little, one of the most widely-known and respected teachers of massage at the time, and although, judged by the exacting standards that prevail to-day, the men and women it trained might fall short, it must be remembered that until the War the following description of a masseur, whether blind or seeing, generally held true :—" So long as the masseur was in possession of a limited knowledge of anatomy, and an even more limited knowledge of physiology, together with some general idea of the theory and practice of massage, and was able to perform certain movements upon the patient's body which were termed *rubbing*, he considered himself competent to undertake massage work."

With the War, and the consequent treatment of war injuries, a great impetus was given to massage, and the standard required became far more exacting ; with every year since it has tended to rise, until to-day the professional qualifications demanded of the masseur are of a very high order. This being the case, it is



imperative that only blind men and women of exceptional calibre shall be accepted for training, and only these can hope to succeed and to win the confidence of the doctors under whose direction they will work, and the patients whom they hope to help. The selection of suitable candidates is by no means the simplest of the problems that the School of Massage has to solve. The masseur who is blind will, by virtue of his very blindness, stand out in the memory of a patient as someone who has either brought healing, or failed to give the longed-for relief, and one unskilled blind masseur would spoil the field for his fellows. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the selection of candidates shall be made with care and foresight.

### **Selection of Candidates.**

The conditions laid down at the present time require candidates for admission to the National Institute's School of Massage\* to be between the ages of 19 and 40, except in the case of medical men or registered nurses who have lost their sight ; these may be accepted even if they have passed the age-limit generally set.

For the blind boy or girl who has left school at the age of 16 there is, therefore, a gap of three years to be filled in before training can be begun. It is important that the habits of methodical reading and study shall not be lost during this intervening period, and, if possible, arrangements should be made for the prospective student to work at English, Latin, mathematics, and elementary anatomy, etc., during this time. For those who have any taste for music, this is recommended, as it inculcates a sense of rhythm, which is a valuable quality in the masseur,† and helps to make his movements pleasantly restful to the patient.

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\* Details as to the personnel of the School, address to which applications for admission should be sent, etc., are given in a leaflet inset.

† While it is convenient to speak of the candidate as masculine, the pronoun " he " should be interpreted throughout as including the feminine.

The four factors of importance in the work of selection are the following :—Physical fitness, educational qualifications, personality, and future prospects. Each is sufficiently important to merit a short note.

### **Physical Fitness.**

The work of a masseur is one that entails long hours of standing, hard physical effort, and that giving out of energy to those who are physically and mentally depressed which makes a heavy inroad on the vitality. Physical fitness is an essential of success. It is, therefore, required that a certificate shall be filled in by the candidate's medical attendant, treating in detail of his general health, the condition of nose, ears, throat, and lungs, and ending with the question :—" Is the candidate physically and mentally capable of instruction in advanced subjects, which involve much private study and prolonged physical effort, and, having qualified, of standing the very strenuous life of a practising masseur (or masseuse), entailing as it does, much mental and physical exertion, and a considerable amount of travelling ? "

In addition to the certificate provided by the candidate's medical attendant, arrangements are made for the would-be student to attend at the Massage School for an examination of his hands, shoulder muscles, general physical development, etc.

### **Educational Fitness.**

Students of the School are required to sit for the examinations of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics at the end of their course, and as the theoretical qualifications required for the Society's examinations necessitate a good general education, the candidate is required to show that he holds the School Leaving Certificate, or one of similar standard. If he has not taken such an examination, he must.



satisfy those responsible as to his capacity at an interview with the Educational Standard Selection Committee of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics, and, if deemed necessary, sit for a Test Examination. Further, as he must be able to read and write Braille with ease and accuracy, he is required to sit for a Braille test before acceptance.

### **Personality.**

The blind masseur who is to succeed must be possessed of those intangible qualities which go to make up personality. He must be sympathetic with suffering, without being weakened by sentimentality; he must be cheerful and reassuring to those who are nervous, scrupulously careful in carrying out the treatment prescribed by the doctor in charge of the case, and able to inspire in those who are treated the will to recover. All these qualities are looked for by those responsible for selection, for without them mere technical knowledge and skill would be unavailing.

### **Prospects.**

Although it is admittedly difficult to look far ahead and decide at the outset exactly what prospects will offer at the end of the two years that must elapse before completion of training, great care is taken before a candidate is accepted to examine the likelihood of his being able to earn a living in his profession when he has secured the necessary qualifications and clinical experience. He is required to furnish a consensus of opinion from at least six medical men in the district in which he hopes to practise that there is scope for a masseur in the locality, and a promise that they will consider helping him by sending him patients when qualified. Further, he is asked to produce some indication from the local authority of his area that it will use its influence to secure for him a hospital appointment. So far as possible, then, his prospects are safeguarded.

The candidate who has been able to satisfy the Massage School on the four counts given above, and for whom the necessary fees are forthcoming, is accepted for training, first as a probationer for a trial period of one month, with a test examination at its close, and then for the full course.

It will be seen from the above statement that the profession is one that is jealously safeguarded from the very outset, so that only those blind men and women capable of maintaining the high tradition built up by the School over a period of more than twenty years are likely to be accepted for training.

### **Fees of the School.**

The cost of training for the course of two years is £220 *per annum* for a resident student, and £120 *per annum* for a day student. The fee in either case covers training, examination entry, and registration fees, with maintenance in the case of the resident student, and lunch, tea, and help with fares in the case of the day student. Where the resident is concerned, the fees paid are exclusive of clothing, travelling to and from home for holiday periods, maintenance during the holidays, pocket-money, medical and dental treatment. Similarly the day student is required to provide his own clothing, to pay his fares to and from home and the School, guide-money where required, and medical or dental treatment. The School is recognised by the Board of Education, and Local Education Authorities are empowered to make grants towards the expenses of students sent by them for training, at the following rates :—

Resident students	...	£110 p.a. for 2 years.
Day students	...	£80 p.a. for 2 years.

Where the student or his friends are not in a position to meet the balance required without help, the National Institute for the Blind endeavours to secure help to supplement the assistance given by the Local Education Authority, or itself makes a grant.



In addition, a limited number of massage scholarships of £40 per annum, granted by Gardner's Trust for the Blind are available for students from England and Wales who are recommended by the National Institute for the Blind, upon satisfactory completion of their month's probationary period.

### **The Course of Instruction.**

Massage students are accepted by the School only on condition that they are prepared to take the full course of two years, and sit for the three examinations (Massage, Remedial Exercises, and Electro-Therapy) of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics. Admission to the School is twice yearly—in January and July. The School sets itself definitely against any application from persons anxious to take only part of the course, for it will train only blind students whose qualifications at the close of their training will be unimpeachable and will bear the strictest comparison with those of the most highly qualified seeing masseur. A departure from this principle would be fatal to the interests of the blind members of a profession that must retain the full confidence of medical men and their patients if it is to carry on useful work.

The training for the examinations of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics in Massage, Remedial Exercises, and Electro-Therapy covers Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology and the Theory and Practice of Massage and Medical Gymnastics, including a working knowledge of the many conditions which can be treated by these methods. The examination falls into three parts, as under :—

- (a) A written examination in (1) Anatomy and Physiology ; (2) Theory of Massage ; (3) Treatment.
- (b) A viva-voce examination in Anatomy and Physiology.



- (c) A practical examination in (1) General care of the patient ; (2) Massage and Remedial Exercises, as applied to medical and surgical conditions ; (3) Bandaging and splinting.

While it is not necessary in this short survey to give in detail the syllabus of the examination, it may be of interest to give a short synopsis of it. It falls into three main parts :—

1. THE HISTORY, THEORY, AIMS AND THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF MASSAGE AND MOVEMENT, AND CONTRA-INDICATIONS.

Under this main head it deals with effleurage, petrissage, friction, tapotement or percussion, shakings, vibrations, stroking, nerve massage, passive movements and active movements, together with the general care of the patient.

2. ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY.

This involves bones, joints, muscles, the nervous system, circulation, viscera, anatomical regions, and surface anatomy.

This part of the syllabus also comprises a study of the muscular, nervous, circulatory, lymphatic, and respiratory systems ; foods and food-stuff ; digestion, metabolism, excretion, temperature, diet, and the ductless glands.

3. PATHOLOGY.

This part treats of the medical and surgical conditions suitable for treatment by Massage and Remedial Exercises, and covers general pathology, injuries to bones, joints, muscles, and tendons, scar tissue, deformities, diseases of muscle, the circulatory system, respiratory system, alimentary canal, nervous system, constitutional diseases, diseases of the





H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES, WITH THE LORD MOYNIHAN OF LEEDS, LEAVING THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND, BETWEEN ROWS OF BLIND MASSEURS AND MASSEUSES, AT THE OPENING OF THE ALFRED EICHHOLZ CLINIC AND INSTITUTE OF MASSAGE AND PHYSIOTHERAPY BY THE BLIND (JULY, 1934).

*[Photograph by permission of Keystone View Company, Inc.]*





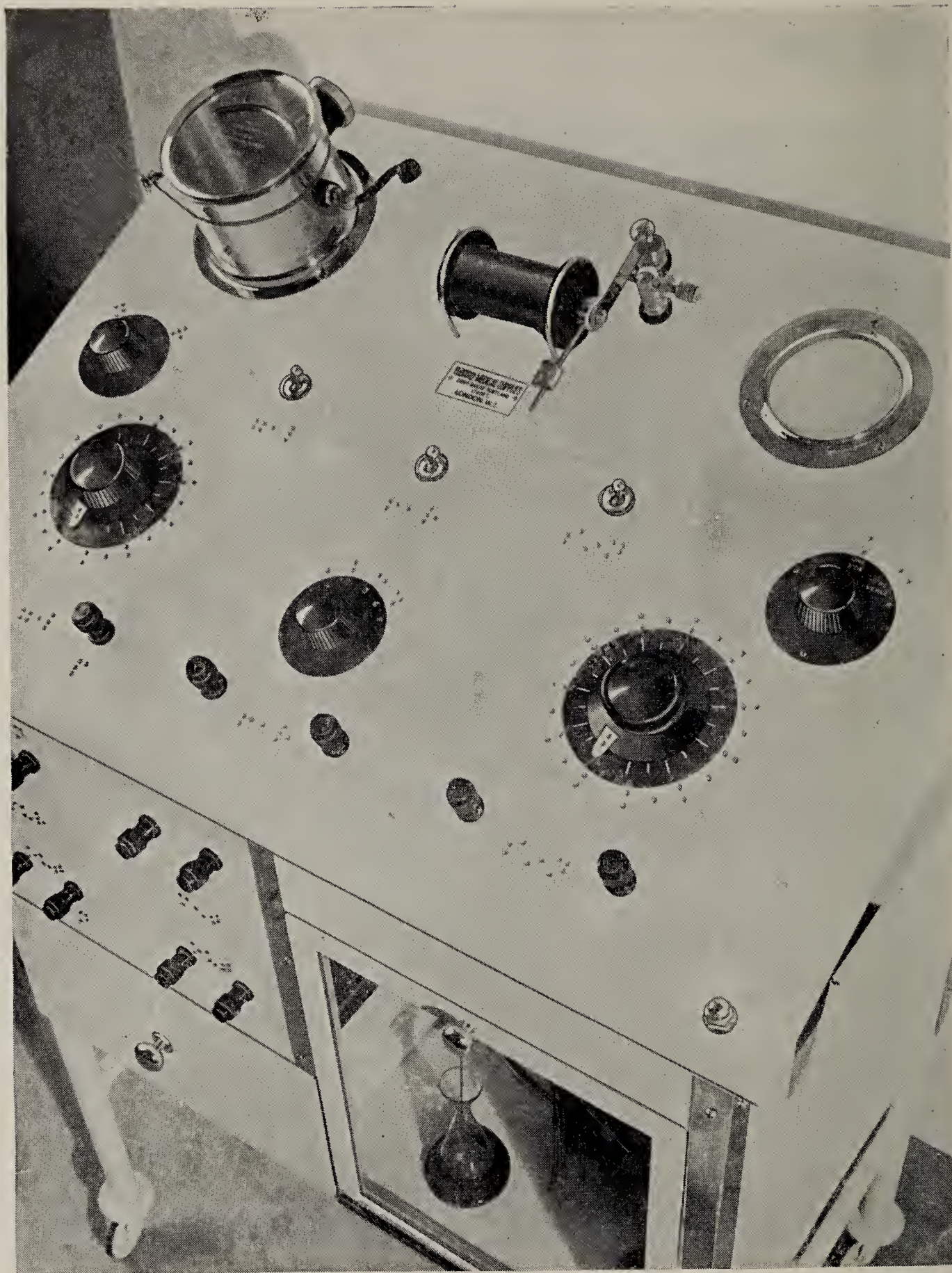
BLIND CHARTERED MASSEUSE ADMINISTERING DIATHERMY TREATMENT IN HER OWN PRIVATE CLINIC. (NOTE THE EASE WITH WHICH THE BLIND OPERATOR IS ABLE TO CHECK THE CURRENT PASSING THROUGH THE BRAILLE METER).





BLIND CHARTERED MASSEUR TESTING FOR REACTION OF DEGENERATION BY MEANS OF  
FARADIC CURRENT WITH MUSCLE TESTING ELECTRODE.





COMBINED GALVANIC, FARADIC, AND SINUSOIDAL CLINIC TABLE (WITH RHYTHMIC SURGER AND INTERRUPTER) DESIGNED TO GIVE BLIND MASSEURS COMPLETE CONTROL OF EARTH-FREE CURRENTS FROM MAIN SUPPLY FOR ELECTRICAL TREATMENTS. NOTE BRAILLE MARKINGS AND MILLIAMPEREMETER (EXTREME TOP LEFT) WHICH ENABLE BLIND OPERATORS TO RECORD ACCURATELY EXACT AMOUNT OF CURRENT PASSING THROUGH PATIENT.



genito-urinary system. For women students, diseases during pregnancy and after child-birth are also included.

### **Examination in Electro-Therapy.**

In order to prepare for the examination in electro-therapy the blind student is required to specialise in this subject for eight months out of his two years' training, devoting not less than 118 hours to lectures and demonstrations, and 300 hours to practical work carried out on patients under the general supervision of the medical officers of the Massage School.

The examination is in two parts :—

1. Faradism, Galvanism, Sinusoidal Current, Radiant Heat, and Infra Red Rays.
2. Diathermy and High Frequency.

### **The School Equipment and Personnel.**

At present the Massage School occupies new and improved quarters at the National Institute for the Blind, opened in 1932 by Dr. Helen Keller. The accommodation includes offices, gymnasium, lecture room, library, rest-room, and bathroom, and has been equipped with all modern training requirements. The lecture-room has its articulated skeletons, one of which is constructed so as to show how each joint may become dislocated, a complete model of the human body, on the left side of which all the superficial structures have been removed in order that the students may examine the deep structures, other models showing heart and lungs, heart and big blood vessels, etc., together with raised diagrams for the use of students during lectures. In the Electrical Section there are instruments designed to enable the blind student to measure the strength of the electric current, special measures to enable him to use the correct amount of drugs in applying certain forms of medical electrical



treatments, Braille alarm clocks for timing treatments, and bath thermometers for gauging the temperature of the water for bath treatments.

### **The Massage Library.**

In 1919, the National Institute for the Blind decided to form a Library for the use of its blind students of massage, and for those who, having qualified, had passed out into practice, but wished still to keep abreast with all modern developments and discoveries. By a happy chance, they were successful in securing the services of a peculiarly gifted Librarian in the person of Dr. Lloyd Johnstone, a medical man who had lost his sight, and had then trained as a masseur at the Institute's Massage School. He devoted himself to building up a fine library, consisting of excerpts on massage from medical books, and articles from the medical and massage journals. To-day the Library contains 312 volumes, consisting of standard works on Massage, Medical Gymnastics, Electro-Therapy, Anatomy, and Physiology, together with a large collection of lectures and pamphlets, as well as books on Elementary Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, and Biology.

Books are sent free on loan to practising masseurs and masseuses in all parts of the country, the cost of postage one way being defrayed by the Library.

In order to keep the blind masseur in touch with the day-to-day happenings in his profession, a monthly periodical, "The Massage Journal," is published in Braille. It contains articles on massage and kindred subjects, notices of interest to qualified blind masseurs, particulars of new apparatus, and a column of events in the massage world.

The staff of the School consists of its Principal and four assistant teachers, all of whom are blind or partially blind, four visiting lecturers (three medical and one lay), and the Secretary. The fact that the

Principal of the School, himself a blind man, headed the list of about 300 seeing candidates when he took the examinations of the Chartered Society, winning distinction in both Massage and Medical Gymnastics, sets the blind student who studies under him an example the value of which it is difficult to over-estimate.

### **Clinical Experience during Training.**

The blind student secures clinical experience during training, partly by carrying out treatment on patients at two of the leading London hospitals, under medical supervision, and partly, since 1932, by giving treatment at an Evening Electrical Clinic held at the Massage School itself. Patients whose means may not permit them to attend a private Clinic, or who are unable to spare time from work for treatment during the day, are treated at the Evening Clinic by the more advanced students of the Massage School, always under the supervision of its two Medical Officers and a sighted Sister in Charge.

The fact that in its first year the Clinic admitted 185 patients, and that at present an average of 140 patients are being treated weekly, shows that its establishment has met a real need, and has conferred a boon on patients and blind students alike.

### **Students' General Welfare.**

Throughout the two-year course, care is taken that the out-of-hours activities of the students shall be conducive to their health and general welfare. They are comfortably housed in carefully selected lodgings or hostels, where a garden is available, encouraged to get as much fresh air and exercise as possible, to join a Sports Club for rowing, dancing, and games, and helped in every way to maintain sound health during a training that is intensely interesting, but admittedly physically and mentally strenuous.



## Settlement and After-Career.

From the very first, as we have pointed out earlier in this Bulletin, the Massage School concerns itself with the future of its students, not accepting those for whom the prospects of employment at the close of training are very uncertain. It tries, as far as possible, to see the end from the beginning, and only to train those for whom there is reason to believe that training will be a prelude to a successful career.

As soon as the blind student has successfully qualified in the three necessary examinations, the National Institute, in co-operation with the local authorities, takes steps to help him to equip a private clinic, generally in his own home. Personal letters are written to medical men in the area, telling them that the student has satisfactorily completed his training, that he has taken the necessary qualifying examinations, and asking them to give him their support. The members of the Committee of the local organisation for the blind may do much to assist the blind masseur to become known in his neighbourhood. Endeavours may also be made to secure for him a post, either as a salaried official, or in an honorary capacity, at the local hospital.

The help given by the National Institute in securing the initial equipment for a Clinic does not end there, for throughout the masseur's career he is enabled to purchase apparatus and appliances for his work at special rates through the Massage Department.

Building up a practice is necessarily a slow business, for the masseur, however highly qualified he may be, must win the confidence of medical men and of patients, one by one, and the National Institute, therefore, stands behind the newly-established blind masseur, and may give him financial help by means of a grant on a declining scale, for a period not exceeding two years. By the end of that time it is assumed that he will have become known, and his good work will have brought its own reward in the establishment of a good connection. The masseur's progress is carefully



watched, and the knowledge that those responsible for his training are seeing month by month how his prospects improve is in itself an incentive to him on the way to complete independence.

From its establishment in 1915, the Massage School has been responsible for the training of 264 masseurs and masseuses. Of this number, 113 were trained by arrangement with St. Dunstan's Organisation for Blinded Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen, at the cost of St. Dunstan's, and for the settlement and after-care of this group St. Dunstan's has made itself responsible. The large majority have been conspicuously successful.

An analysis made during 1935 of the 151 cases for which the National Institute undertakes responsibility shows that they fell into the following groups :—

†Settled down satisfactorily in private practice and/or hospital posts, supporting themselves, and in many cases families as well ...	70
In the early stages of building up a practice	16
*Less successful owing to environment or personality ... ..	6
*Practices affected by ill-health, old age, etc.	8
Just qualified ; settlements not yet completed ... ..	3
Settlement and after-care not effected by the N.I.B. ... ..	2
*Retired on account of old age or total incapacity through ill-health ... ..	20
Retired on marriage ... ..	1
Deceased... ..	15
Taken up other work ... ..	4
Lost sight of ... ..	3
Decertified ... ..	3
	<hr/>
	151
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† Many of the blind masseurs and masseuses in this group are doing extremely well.

\* The possibility of insurance of masseurs against illness or other misfortune, or the formation of a contributory fund for this purpose, is at present under consideration.

## **The Association of Certificated Blind Masseurs.**

In 1919 the above Association was founded to represent and safeguard the professional interests of blind masseurs and masseuses. Through its employment bureau, doctors and prospective patients are put into touch with masseurs and masseuses, and it also acts as agent for two large Insurance Companies which undertake all forms of insurance for blind masseurs and masseuses. From 1922 till his death, Sir Robert Jones, K.B.E., C.B., acted as its President, and did much for the cause of massage as a profession for the blind; happily for the Association, he was succeeded in the Presidency by the Lord Moynihan of Leeds. The list of eminent medical men who have consented to become Vice-Presidents of the Association is in itself a criterion of the position that the blind masseur occupies in the eyes of the medical profession.

## **The Eichholz Clinic.**

In July 1934, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales opened the Alfred Eichholz Memorial Clinic and Institute of Massage and Physiotherapy by the Blind, and, in so doing, to quote the Prince's own words at the opening ceremony, "marked the accomplishment of the first stage of the work (*i.e.*, of the School of Massage) and the inauguration of the second, in the promotion of massage as a profession for the blind."

The Clinic (which is the recognised national headquarters of blind chartered masseurs and masseuses) was the gift of Mr. William Eichholz, who equipped it in memory of his cousin, Dr. Alfred Eichholz, for many years Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education, and an enthusiastic worker in the interests of the blind. It is situated a few doors from the National Institute for the Blind, at 204-6, Great Portland Street, and its object is to bring before the public the special capacity of the blind masseur in giving treatment, and to provide



the medical profession with a convenient means of contact with blind masseurs and physio-therapists.

The Clinic is entirely on one floor level, the lift opening directly on to it ; a tour of the premises, from the waiting-room and reception office, leads the visitor first into the doctor's room, and then into the nine rooms reserved for treatments.

In the first of these paraffin wax treatment is given, and in the second there is a general bath for infra-red rays. Three other treatment rooms follow, all fitted with the same apparatus, consisting of diathermy and high frequency machines, and the latest combined A.C. clinic switch table, producing galvanism, faradism, and sinusoidal currents, complete with electro-magnetic surger and interrupter, and all fitted with Braille lettering and Braille milliamperemeters for the use of the blind operator. In addition there are two standard lamps for radiant heat or infra-red rays as required, and arm and leg baths, plinth, etc.

There is a Swedish Remedial Exercise room fitted with high and low plinths, stools, wall-bars, rib-stools, and head suspension apparatus, bathrooms with foam bath, shower bath, teak bath, and foot-baths, a room for ultra-violet ray treatment (which is given by a fully-sighted Hospital Sister) fitted with a special quartz mercury vapour lamp, three patients' rest-rooms and dressing-rooms, and a staff-room.

In the fittings and hangings of the rooms care has been taken throughout that the patient shall be cheered and encouraged by brightness and beauty. Cut flowers, delicately coloured curtains, and comfortable couches all play their part, and soft toys and picture books are provided for the smallest patients. Light refreshments are supplied at a nominal cost.

There are two Medical Officers on the Clinic Staff (both specialists in physical medicine) and an influential Medical Advisory Board is under the Chairmanship of the Lord Moynihan of Leeds.

## **Conclusion.**

The hardest burden that blindness imposes upon the self-reliant man or woman is dependence upon others. Massage is a profession by which they not only gain independence in a material sense, but a knowledge that they can contribute generously to the health and well-being of their fellow-men. It is, perhaps, for this reason, above every other, that the blind man or woman apparently fitted by health, temperament, education, and general ability to take up this exacting but satisfying profession should be helped to do so.

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**Requests for further information, and applications for admission to the Massage School of the National Institute for the Blind should be made to The Secretary, Massage School, 224-6-8, Great Portland Street, London, W.1.**

**The Association of Certificated Blind Masseurs will be glad to inform any enquirers of the addresses of chartered blind masseurs or masseuses in their area. Apply :—The Secretary, Association of Certificated Blind Masseurs, 224-6-8, Great Portland Street, London, W.1.**









## OTHER N.I.B. BULLETINS.

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|----|--|-----|
| 1. | Employment of the Blind (Employment of blind persons in ordinary factories and workshops, and Sub-Contracting as a means of finding new occupations) ... | 3d. |
| 2. | Museums and the Blind ... ..   | 3d. |
| 3. | Gardening for the Blind ... ..   | 3d. |
| 4. | A Handbook on the Deaf-Blind ... ..  | 6d. |
| 5. | Basket-making by the Blind ... ..  | 6d. |
| 6. | The Care of the Blind Baby ... ..  | 3d. |
| 7. | A History of Blind Welfare in England and Wales  | 6d. |
| 8. | Report on Sighted Labour in Workshops for the<br>Blind ... ..  | 6d. |
| 9. | Blind University Graduates ... ..  | 6d. |

